

Genuine Family Solidarity

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For thousands of years, divine religions and various schools of thought have cherished and upheld human values such as affection, unity and fraternity as integral aspects of culture. To be kind and affectionate towards others is a basic teaching common to almost all cultures.

At the same time, there have always been individuals and groups who have disagreed with these basic principles due to psychological factors or lack of proper understanding. They have not realized the essence of human life and its truths and values. They have failed to reach agreement with their fellow beings with regard to the principles of love, affection, unity and fraternity. Such nevertheless, such people cannot adversely affect these principles or other's belief in them.

First reason: The instinct of self-sacrifice and the drive to allay the pain and grief of others and providing for their welfare are so great that they do not need verification. A profound sense of sympathy for and identification with the pains and pleasures of other human beings, even if this does not assume a practical or outward manifestation, is innate in most people. If this were absent, individuals and groups would have destroyed society through egotism, like an avalanche that turns to dust everything that comes in its way.

Second reason: This very profound and powerful sense of concern for others has, till now, enabled Man to powerfully resist the

destructive force of selfishness. In addition, it has, to a large extent, also neutralized selfishness, not just through the rules and penal measures, but also through its own profundity. The active life force and innate drive for self-protection have enabled the perpetuation of Man's existence throughout history.

- 1- This life force is activated by recourse to any possible means for carrying on living, and provides for the means of survival till the appointed time. Man is faced with the compulsory need for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination to facilitate communal life, for, without this, human life would have been devastated by people's unbridled selfishness and their interference with natural phenomena. Human life has been perpetuated by these factors and not only due to peoples' love and affection for one another, which, as I mentioned, is a basic human value.
- 2- Although considerable feats, such as the construction of the Egyptian pyramids or the eruption of political and industrial revolutions, can ensure progress, voluntary activity and sacrifice are impossible without value-oriented freedom. All activities that are geared towards fellow-feeling and identification with other's pain and pleasure emerge from the initial love and affection shown towards children by their parents.

Third reason: The impulse behind the revolutions that Man has wrought in the course of ages stems from the innate human desire for upholding justice, truth, freedom, dignity and respect. Without doubt, all of this would not exist without the primary love and affection that fill people's heart due to the different sentiments expressed in their childhood by their parents and kin.

Fourth reason: Sublime feelings and sentiments are the fundamental roots of the growth and evolution of any society. Even though those who reach the state of spiritual edification make up a very small minority, as compared to ordinary people whose sole logic is

selfishness, in every epoch this minority has been the pride and glory of Man's history, serving as a beacon of hope for the most informed and aware human beings.

Fifth reason: If one collects all of the world's literary and mystical masterpieces and all the books that have sought to fathom Man's abilities and inner nature (ranging from the songs of the Indian Vedas to Homer's Khamseh to the literary works of Sa'adi and Hafez to Jalaluddin Muhammad Maulavi's Mathnawi to Shakespeare's works to Victor Hugo's Les Miserables to Tolstoy copious writings, and so on) but omits from them the sublime values and ethics, the life-inspiring human feelings and sentiments, freedom, the demand for justice, sacrifice in defending the life of others, dignity, love and conscience, they would have nothing to make them worth reading at all!

All this leads us to the conclusion that Man should always, and by all permissible means, seek to prevent the collapse of the family circle, for a sound family is the first and most genuine source of Man's sense of love, fellow-feeling, unity, and fraternity.

Scientific observations and experiences as well as intuition prove that in all societies and ages, children serve as an image of their parents' personalities. The survival of most creatures depends on the sentiments shown to them by their parents. These are natural and profound sentiments. The source of human love and affection is Man's inherent capacity for such feeling. If this capacity is not naturally activated through family solidarity, it will lead to psychological disturbances that might even be incurable.

Alienation, especially from close relatives, such as parents, brothers and sisters, is a major cause of anxiety and depression. Neglect of mental problems, caused by the feeling of having no one to turn to in the wake of this sort of alienation, can create major damage. At times, this can even lead to suicide. Those who have been deprived of a proper family circle cannot establish affectionate relations. Nor can they have true joy

in being united with anyone. Since such people have not enjoyed true love, affection, and other such sentiments, they cannot express these sentiments themselves. Consequently, they are like inert and unaware nuts and bolts, mere devices and nothing else. They can easily be manipulated by tyrannical power-wielders and despots, who care nothing at all for fellow human beings.

Reasons for the Annihilation of Sublime Feelings and Sentiments in People Deprived of a Proper Family Circle

There are numerous reasons for the annihilation of sublime human feelings and sentiments in a person deprived of a proper family circle.

First: This can happen because of a person's constant encounter with people, things, and actions that are not in tune with his or her own sentiments. Consequently, such a person will always be deprived of sensing and feeling the joys of life. Life devoid of positive, life-enhancing sentiments and feelings is deficient, and generally disrupts a person's natural psychological state.

Second: The annihilation of sublime human feelings and sentiments in people deprived of a natural and proper family circle resembles the inability of a branch to grow when it is cut off from the tree's trunk. Psychologically speaking, such a person is similar to a fish out of water, which dies by being cut off from the source of its life. Such a person will suffer even if he lives in a world which by far outpaces the world's progressive countries in terms of peace and welfare. This is the malady of the contemporary age which, according to some thinkers, has turned the Earth from a beautiful abode into a burning engine, and which will gravely threaten Man's survival in the 21st century if no remedy is sought for it.

Islam regards the provision of affection and mutual respect as a fundamental duty for the members of a family. This includes both the love and kindness of parents towards their children and the love and respect of the children towards their parents. Islam also stresses such

love and affection among other family members. These precepts are so obvious and authoritative that there is no need to further elaborate on them.

The Holy Quran states the following with regard to doing good to parents:

*And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him and goodness to your parents...(17:23)*¹

There are also numerous traditions in our scriptures with regard to respecting and loving children, especially young children.

1. Thus, the Holy Prophet (S) insisted: Respect your children and bring them up with meritorious culture.²
2. At times, a child would be brought to the Prophet (S) for him to bless. The Prophet (S) would take the child in his lap. Sometimes, the child would urinate in the Prophet's lap, for which those present would violently scold it. But, the Prophet (S) would say: "Do not disturb the child and let him urinate." Then, the Prophet (S) would allow the child to freely urinate, after which he would pray for it and give it a name. Seeing that the Prophet (S) did not show any sign of being annoyed, those who had brought the child to him would be filled with joy. The Prophet (S) would clean his clothes after their departure.³
3. Once, while praying, the Holy Prophet (S) prolonged his prostration. When he finished his prayers, he was asked:

1- The following Quranic verses also dwell upon goodness toward parents: Baqarah, Verse 83, Lugman, Verse 14, Nisa, Verse 36, Ankabut, Verse 8, Anam, Verse 151, Ahqaf, Verse 15. The following verses refer to the holy apostles with regard to the said duty: Ibrahim, Verse 41, Mariam, Verse 32, Naml, Verse 19, Noah, Verse 28.

2- *Bihar al - Anwar*, Vol 23, p. 114

3- *Ibid*, Vol 6, p.153

"We had never seen such a prolonged prostration till now. Was revelation sent down to you?" The Prophet (S) replied: "Revelation was not sent to me (then). Rather, my child had sat on my shoulder and I did not wish to hurry so that he would be able to come down when he pleased."¹

4. Once, when the Holy Prophet (S) observed his noon prayer with the people, he quickly performed the third and fourth raka'. The people asked him if anything had happened. He replied by asking them, "Did you not hear the wailing of a child?"²
5. Once, when the Holy Prophet (S) was seated, Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (peace be upon them) turned towards him. When the Prophet (S) saw them, he stood up and went to welcome them. He mounted them on his shoulders, and said: "What a good mount you have and what good riders you are!"³
6. The Prophet (S) was in the habit of showing love and kindness to children.⁴
7. Imam Reza (AS) stated: Establish good relations with the big and the small (i.e. the children and adults) in life.⁵
8. Ja'far ibn Mohammad, that is Imam Sadiq (AS), quoted the Prophet (S) as saying, "There are five and greeting children so that it would become a custom after me."⁶
9. One day, the Prophet (S) saw a man with his two sons. The

1- Ibid, Vol 10, p.82

2- *Kafi*, Mohammad ibn Yaqoob Kuleini, Vol 6, p.48

3- *Bihar*, Vol 1, p. 80

4- *Al - Mohajat al - Bayza*, Mulla Mahsen Fayz Kashani, Vol 3, p.366

5- *Mustadrak*, Nouri, Vol 2, p. 67

6- *Wasail al -Shia'*, Vol 3, p 239

man kissed only one of his sons. The Prophet (S) asked him: "Why didn't you treat your children equally?"¹

10. The Holy Prophet (S) stated: "Whoever has a child should adopt a child's behavior (to voice his feeling and to rear the child.)"²

11. Imam Ali (AS) has also been quoted as expressing a similar statement.³

12. The Holy Prophet (S) said: "May God bless a person who does good to his child through respecting and loving and teaching and training him."⁴

13. Ibn Abbas quoted the Holy Prophet (S) as saying: "Whoever makes his or her daughter happy is like [one who] frees a slave from among the offspring of Ismail (AS), and whoever makes his or her son happy is like [he or she who] escapes God's wrath."⁵

14. The Holy Prophet (S) said: "Respect your elders and show love and compassion to your children."

This has been set forth in many other traditions.⁶

Those who are deprived of a proper family circle have been cut off from unity, which is the reality of existence.

In view of scientific and religious proofs and intuitive knowledge, Man's existence has a sublime unity beyond the corporeal body and

1- *Makarim al - Akhlaq*, Tabarsi, p.113

2- *Wasail al - shia'*, Vol 5, p.126

3- *Ibid*

4- *Mustadrak*, Vol 2, p. 626

5- *Makarim al - Akhlaq*, p. 114

6- *Oyun Akhbar al - Reza (AS)*, p.163C.F. *The Child from the Perspective of Heredity and Upbringing* by Mohammad Taqi Falsafi.

physical matter. Islamic sources have mentioned this unity, such as in the following Quranic verse:

For this reason did We prescribe to the children of Israel that whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men; and whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men...

A verse by Sa'adi also emphasizes the same concept about human unity:

*Human beings are members of one body.
They are of the same genuine creation.
If an organ is pained
The other limbs will also suffer.
O you who are heedless of others' pain! You do not deserve to be called human.¹*

This unity which based on human growth becomes ever-stronger and salient it demonstrates itself in various rings of creation i.e. the relations between son and father, mother and child. These various instinctual relationships become more solid in the context of natural human life thanks to <<spiritual growth of human person>>. This, in other words, is an expression of divine and natural law which in the absence of these various <<rings of creation>> could lead humanity into fragmentalization, estrangement from others and finally self-alienation.

1- This tradition has also been set forth in *Kafi* by Mohammad ibn Yaqoob Kulayni, Vol, p.166: "The believers are like the limbs and organs of one body. If a limb is pained, the pain is felt by other limbs. Their spirits are one. The believer's soul is close to the soul of God and is closer than the rays of the sun to the sun (in terms of distance)".